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ADOPTION OF THE REPORT OF THE COMMISSION ON ITS
TWENTY-SIXTH SESSION

Draft report

Addendum

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Chapter IV. PROGRAMME QUESTIONS (continued)

C. Activities of the regional commissions

1. The activities of the regional commissions were described in detail in working paper ESA/P/WP/118, which was made available to the Population Commission.

1. Economic Commission for Africa

2. The representative of the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) informed the Commission about the emerging population issues in Africa. Stressing the variety of population dynamics characterizing Africa, he noted that member States in the continent had generally initiated or promoted population policies aimed at curbing population growth and at monitoring population movements. The difficulties in mastering problems related to population redistribution and other migration issues were underscored.

3. The Commission was informed that the ECA secretariat continued to implement its work programme on population, which included research, training, advisory services and information. As awareness of member States regarding population problems increased, it was likely that more requests would be made for advisory

services and assistance. The ECA representative indicated that preparatory work for the next African Population Conference was under way. The Conference would convene in 1992.

2. Economic Commission for Europe

4. The Commission was informed that the 1989-1990 population programme of the Economic Commission for Europe included four major activities: (a) the promotion of fertility and family surveys; (b) the collection, analysis and dissemination of information on population policies; (c) the study of population aging and its social and economic implications; and (d) the analysis of the time-use of women. Recently, a fifth activity relating to international migration was added to the programme.

5. With regard to the promotion of fertility and family surveys, the ECE was collaborating with a number of national demographic research centres. A core questionnaire for the surveys was undergoing a process of revision and, once adopted by participating countries, would be used to gather internationally comparable events and current status data on fertility, nuptiality and activity variables.

6. Aware of the significance being accorded by member countries to international migration, the ECE secretariat, in collaboration with UNFPA, was preparing an expert group meeting to review the main issues related to international migration in the major world regions. The meeting, which would take place at Geneva in July 1991, would provide a basis to initiate or strengthen policy-oriented research in international migration at the regional commissions.

3. Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean

7. The Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) prepared a written statement which was made available to the Population Commission in working paper ESA/P/WP/118.

4. Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia

8. During the period under review, the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) undertook both recurrent and specific activities. Recurrent activities included rendering regional advisory services, the publication of the bi-annual ESCWA Population Bulletin, the maintenance of the Population Reference Centre, the organization of meetings with didactic and promotional purposes, and the production of demographic and related socio-economic indicators, which were being updated every other year. ESCWA conducted an in-depth review and assessment of the methodology used for the production of the above-mentioned indicators. Regarding specific activities, ESCWA, among other things, carried out and published a study on levels, trends and socio-economic differentials of infant and child mortality in the region.

9. Owing to the present situation in the region, the programme of work for the biennium had not been completed. It was expected that in addition to undertaking recurrent activities, ESCWA would be involved in the analysis of population movements associated with the Gulf crisis. Those movements were not only substantial but had also social and economic consequences affecting, inter alia, individual and family welfare, employment and workers remittances. An understanding of those population movements and their consequences would be an essential prerequisite for the formulation of national plans and policies for reconstruction and development in the region.

5. Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific

10. The Commission was informed that the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) continued to focus its work on three broad areas: technical assistance, research, and information dissemination. Its regional advisers and professional staff provided technical assistance in, for example, the analysis of demographic and family planning surveys, the integration of population concerns into development planning, and assisting developing countries in establishing and strengthening their population information centres and related information systems. It also assisted countries by organizing training courses, workshops and study tours.

11. In order to help developing countries to evolve adequate strategies, policies and measures to overcome their various population problems, ESCAP conducted collaborative research on various issues, including demographic-economic interrelationships, the consequences of population change in Asia, urbanization and socio-economic development in the region, the accessibility of contraceptives and the means for improving management information systems in family planning. Because of the importance of population information, ESCAP continued to promote new and better techniques for handling, sharing and disseminating population information, especially through the Asia-Pacific Population Information Network. Two major means were used to disseminate information: publications, including bibliographic services; and meetings. Among the latter, population issues were discussed at the annual sessions of the Commission, the biennial session of the Committee on Population and Social Development and at other meetings. In 1992, ESCAP and UNFPA would jointly sponsor the decennial Fourth Asian and Pacific Population Conference at Jakarta, Indonesia, with the Government of Indonesia providing all host-country facilities.

D. Requirements for population specialists in national institutions and international organizations

12. The Commission was pleased to note that in response to Economic and Social Council resolution 1989/93 of 26 July 1989, a report had been prepared on requirements for population specialists in national institutions and international organizations.

13. In regard to requirements and training of population specialists at the national level, the Commission was informed that since the data required for a study had to come from the countries themselves, a short, structured questionnaire had been prepared and mailed to 41 countries (members of and observers to the Population Commission and some developing countries that had requested assistance from the United Nations in building local infrastructure). Out of 41 countries, 21 had responded to the questionnaire.

14. Regarding the availability of population specialists currently working, the Commission took note of the fact that there was general dissatisfaction about the insufficient number of population specialists employed in the public and academic sectors in both the developed and developing countries studied.

15. With respect to vacancies, the Commission was informed that in countries that responded to the questionnaire, a total of 674 vacancies were identified, 301 in the public sector and 373 in the academic sector, thus indicating that there were 11 vacancies per 100 existing posts. It was also reported that a relatively higher proportion of vacancies were found in the developing countries (18 per cent of posts were vacant) than in the developed countries (3 per cent). The data indicated also a relatively higher proportion of vacancies in the academic sector (13 per cent) than in the public sector (10 per cent). The Commission was thus alerted to the serious implications of those statistics, the most important of which was that the provision of new generations of population specialists and other professionals with some knowledge of population might be seriously limited particularly in the group of developing countries where almost one third of academic posts were reported vacant.

16. The Commission was informed of the estimate that 3,190 new population specialists would be required during the next five years, 51 per cent in the public sector and the other 49 per cent in the academic sector; 35 per cent of the total in the developed countries and 65 per cent in developing countries.

17. With respect to the selection of population specialists from within the Organization, the Commission was informed that the filling of posts at the entry levels was primarily through either the internal competitive examination or the national competitive examination.

18. In regard to the recruitment and placement of technical co-operation expert personnel, the Commission was pleased to note that rules for technical advisory staff guaranteed a measure of autonomy with levels of remuneration appropriate for recruitment of competent personnel. The Commission was informed that a special category of personnel recruited were the associate experts. There were currently close to 100 associate experts, of all specializations, serving throughout the less developed regions. Recently, such experts had also been assigned to Headquarters.
